



The Monster’S Bipolarity in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*

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Abstract

This paper attempts to explore bipolar disorder on the monster’s psyche, as a result of trauma that he develops from the society in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. This study follows the monster’s possible symptoms of bipolar disorder, and analyse them gradually, from the first stages of the disorder to more severe stages. It aims to prove the monster’s unstable mood, lack of identity, negative self-image, criminal behaviour, and suicidal thoughts in bipolar disorder symptoms’ frame. The study applies psychoanalysis, mainly the concept of bipolar disorder by Kraepelin, Falret, and Baillarger. This study follows a qualitative methodology to provide a deep analysis of the monster’s conflict with bipolar disorder on one side and the society on the other side. This concept is rarely studied on the novel from the monster’s perspective by scholars. Thus, the study’s main results are the investigation of bipolar disorder experience in the novel, and the main role of society in escalating the disorder.

Key words: Bipolar disorder; Psychoanalysis; Trauma; Kraepelin; Falret; Baillarger; Mary Shelley

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INRODUCTION

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is a novel written by Mary Shelley, and was published on the first of January 1818

in London. Mary Shelley is an English writer from the nineteenth century. She is mostly famous for her novel Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. The reason behind writing this novel was a competition between Shelley and two other authors on who could write the most perfect horror story. Shelley utilises very formal words to create intense emotional discourses between her characters during the novel. She keeps a good balance between her diction of words and the gothic events in the novel, as she uses many romantic words which highlight gothic genre such as “misfortune”, “wretch” and “gloomy”. Psychoanalysis which was founded by Sigismund Schlomo Freud is a theory that depends on the idea of how unconscious mind is influenced by outside forces, and bipolar disorder is one of the domains in this approach as it is concerned with an unstableness in human mind that causes irrational episodes of depression and mania, thus impacts the general behaviour of the human. The origin of bipolar disorder goes back to ancient Greak when they defined melancholia, and mania. Then, this concept was continuously developed by many psychologists such as Falret, and Baillarger until it was classified broadly by Emil Kraepelin. The reason behind selecting this work is the psychoanalytic insights in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, because it describes the psychological problems of the characters such as the monster.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marry Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is studied from different critical perspectives. In study of “Feminism and the Elimination of Female Characters in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*” (2019), Haneen Abid argues the novel by applying feminism. Abid (2019) scrutinizes female characters, and their weak roles in the novel which are represented by marginalization from their men, and the society on them. Abid (2019) sheds light on women suffrage, and their elimination as minor characters

that they even don't survive until the end of the novel. Abid (2019) contends that all women in the novel are domesticated, and obedient to their men in a way that creates the superiority of males' characters on them: "They are all described as

being beautiful, fair, selfless, weak, and submissive to man's will no matter how unjust it might be, and they never try to change their fate" (302).

The work of Hemangi Bhagwat and Tanya D'souza in study of "Master-Slave Dialectic and Mimicry: A Postcolonial Analysis of the Subjectivity of Frankenstein and his Monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*" (2020), approaches the novel by applying Postcolonialism. Bhagwat and D'souza (2020) focus on the relationship between the creator and the monster in the novel and its connection with the slavery back in the nineteenth century in the British society, as well as imperialism, and racism. Bhagwat and D'souza (2020) describe the monster and the creator relationship by slavery, in which the monster rebels against his master as a result of the education he gets during the novel: "In conclusion, the paper will attempt to understand the result of the interminable revolt between Frankenstein and the Creature who oscillate between both the extremes of the master-slave dialectic" (48).

My study, however, will differ from the aforementioned studies, as it will explore the psychology of the monster's mentality, and his moods swings. It will unpack the monster's possible struggle from disorders like bipolar disorder, and trauma as well as, their interdependent relationship. Unlike these studies, my study will shed light on the creature himself and the analysis of his inner emotions reflected by his unjustified-reckless behaviours. It will also study the creature's reaction on his mistreatment from the society and his creator in the first role.

METHODOLOGY

This research follows a qualitative study of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. It follows a close reading of the selected work setting, characters and plot. Therefore, it uses psychoanalysis as a conceptual framework. First, it will analyze the setting to demonstrate how time and place badly affect the characters. Second, it uses the concept of bipolar to reveal how characters are tortured. Thirdly, the plot will be analyzed in terms of the events that depict the lives of the characters. Thus, psychoanalysis is the main conceptual framework used in the whole research.

OBJECTIVES

This research attempts to:

1. To examine *Frankenstein* by Mary shelly.
2. To explore psychoanalysis in the selected work.
3. To connect psychoanalysis to our daily lives.

QUESTIONS

The research answers the following questions:

1. How does Mary Shelley use *Frankenstein* in a psychoanalytic context?
2. How does *Frankenstein* depict psychoanalysis?
3. How Psychoanalysis analyzes unconscious minds of the characters?

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* outlines the story of Victor Frankenstein an intelligent scientist from Geneva who creates an exceptional way to resurrect dead humanely organs after gathering them as a one entity identified to be the first creature of its kind. Nevertheless, this creature turns out to be more vicious, and ferocious than what Frankenstein expected. In fact, he is dismissed by all the humankind and Frankenstein himself for his appearance. As a result, he evolves his denied tender emotions into hatred and hostility by seeking for revenge from his creator. However, the novel is narrated as a flashback form of Victor's entailment to a mariner called Robert Walton after he ends up afflicted on his ice stuck ship. Frankenstein stays there for a while and he dies out of sickness. Robert Walton who is a pathfinder attempting to explore the North Pole writes Victor's story in a form of letter and sends it to his beloved sister. The Monster in the novel endeavours to engage with the society members specifically, when he hides himself in the De Lacey's family's cottage cabin. He devotes his time to secure this poor family with food and wood. In reward, he begins his education by acquiring, and learning the language as well as the nature of the life from the family vaguely.

One day, the monster decides to reveal himself for them; He enters their cottage, and explains himself to De Lacey, a blind elderly person. De Lacey sympathises with him, yet the other family members Felix, Agatha, and Safie interrupt their speech by hitting the monster with a wooden stick. Then, the monster escapes away in pain, and despair. After his disappointment in the De Lacey's family, the monster strives to seek revenge from all the humankind, mainly his creator Victor Frankenstein. He manages to discover his creator identity by some books that were left in his Jacket, including Frankenstein Journal. The turning point of the novel is displayed when the monster kills all Victor's family members, because he refuses to demand the Monster's command, which is to create another female counterpart for him. Thus, the creator rebels on his creature, and sacrifices his life for this duty. The novel ends when the Monster commits suicide by self-immolation upon his creator death.

In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the demonstration of bipolar disorder is depicted through the Monster's mood, in which he oscillates between euphoria, and devastation.

When Frankenstein encounters the monster on the top of an ice mountain; Frankenstein threatens to destroy the monster's life, yet the monster defends himself utilising hopeful words about life, regardless of how sorrowful it is: "Life, although it may only be an accumulation of anguish, is dear to me, and I will defend it" (80). This incident is an evident indication of his manic mood. He is entirely full of ecstasy to proceed this life, no matter what opposes to him.

In the next part of the same discussion between Frankenstein and the monster, the monster further illustrates how miserable and wretch he was at his first life stage: "I was a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; I knew, and could distinguish, nothing; but feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat down and wept" (83). At this point, there is an implication of his previous gloomy mood in the novel. Thus, it can be inferred that the monster suffers from episodes of depression followed by episodes of mania. This circle frames the fundamental blocks of bipolar disorder.

Bipolar disorder, previously referred to as manic depression, is a chronic mental disorder that creates sporadic and unpredictable changes in mood, energy, and concentration. Moods can fluctuate between extreme highs, in which an individual may feel overly excitable and energized, to extreme lows, during which they may feel hopeless and indifferent. The "highs" are referred to as manic episodes, and in less severe cases they can be categorized as hypomanic episodes. Whereas, the "lows" are referred to as depressive episodes (Mardon and Steen 1).

People with bipolar disorder suffer from lack of identity, as they find a difficulty in referring to themselves with words, due to their mood swings that agitate their minds most of the time. In the novel, while the monster is trying to explore the nature of life, he questions himself about his innate nature, and his true identity in this world. In spite of all the wasted attempts to find a referent for himself, he is confused with no answers. He explains his aforementioned thoughts, and experiences in a form of a tale to his creator.

Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant, but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endued with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man. I was more agile than they and could subsist upon coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs. When I looked around I saw and heard of none like me. Was I, then, a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned? (98).

While bipolar disorder mostly manifests as episodic symptoms, some can linger in times when the person is not experiencing manic episodes or severe depressive episodes. This can make it very difficult to create a frame

of reference for the self in absence of the disorder because symptoms may remain during those periods (Mardon and Steen 16).

Most of the People who suffer from bipolar disorder develop very negative self-image, that is resulted for the society's perception of their illness. They are unfairly looked down on, as a shame, or a fault that can't be dealt with, in normal ways. Eventually, this leads to a melancholic carousel of self-reflection, in which they firmly believe in people's negative views, as a punishment they deserve: "Their inter-personal experiences shaped their self-definitions, with their being viewed as the illness, feeling judged, and being considered someone to be ashamed of contributed to the confusion and negative bias of their sense of self" (Inder et al.127).

This can be illustrated through the monster's dialogue with Sir Robert Walton, after his creator's death. The monster describes how people awfully perceive him. Even though, he is better than many evil human beings, who haven't been judged harshly, or looked down on, in the same way. He explains his misery, and likens himself to an abortion that should be kicked on by all humans: "I, the miserable and the abandoned, am an abortion, to be spurned at, and kicked, and trampled on" (186). in this part, he uses many aggressive words to define himself. This portrays his negative self-evaluation that he develops from the society's biased perspective, as well as his mental illness bipolar disorder that leads to many sophisticated abnormal actions, and crimes.

One of the monstrous impacts of bipolar disorder on the individual, and the society is committing crimes upon its patients, especially murdering. This happens during the both phases of bipolar disorder in which patients attempt to make murders as a response to their depressive, or manic mood. This outcome is associated with one of the most important factors of this disorder which is the environmental trauma. In fact, most of the criminal patients with bipolar disorder have a background of traumatic events, certainly in an early stage of their lives. Trauma is an unexpected, dreadful or harsh incident that impacts someone mentally in a way that sometimes leads to a physical or psychological problem. These incidents include practices of violence such as harassment, abusing, and assault. "Bipolar disorder is a severe and prevalent psychiatric disease. Poor outcomes include a high frequency of criminal acts, imprisonments, and repeat offenses. Criminal acts may also occur during the depressive phases of bipolar disorder. The most serious offenses are associated with altruistic homicide" (Fovet et al.348).

The monster in the novel murders all of his creator's beloved ones, yet he considers what he does as a part of his revenge against the society, and his creator, due to the torture that he has to face because of his hideous appearance which carries the society to dismiss him away in all the awful means, then. This reveals the traumatic

events that affect the monster mentality, and escalate his mental confusion to develop bipolar disorder in later times. The monster expresses his collided desires between goodness and evilness to Sir Walton after his creator death. He admits all of his crimes. However, he doesn't have any sense of guilt because he only desires love and fellowship, but he receives nothing except hate, and denial from all of the society including his creator, which is the main reason behind his trauma, and torture:

You, who call Frankenstein your friend, seem to have a knowledge of my crimes and his misfortunes. But, in the detail which he gave you of them, he could not sum up the hours and months of misery which I endured, wasting in impotent passions. For whilst I destroyed his hopes, I did not satisfy my own desires. They were for ever ardent and craving; still I desired love and fellowship, and I was still spurned. Was there no injustice in this? Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all human kind sinned against me? (185)

Childhood traumas have been linked to the development of many psychiatric diseases such as depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, psychotic disorder, low self-esteem and suicidal thoughts, and personality pathologies. In addition, childhood traumas were also reported to be associated with pleasure and excitement seeking, attention deficit, and impulsive behaviors such as making sudden decisions, anger control problems, violence, and criminal tendency (Özsoy, Taşçı, and Atmaca).

Bipolar disorder increases the suicide risk, whether by attempting to commit suicide, or by committing it. People who suffer from bipolar disorder mostly develop suicidal thoughts in their depressive episodes of the disorder. "Suicidal behaviour is quite frequent among subjects with BD, as up to 4–19% of them ultimately end their life by suicide, while 20–60% of them attempt suicide at least once in their lifetime" (Dome, Rihmer, and Gonda 2).

At the end of the novel, Victor Frankenstein dies in Sir Walton's ship informing him before about his story and duty of killing the monster he creates. He knows that death is coming soon, so he asks him to complete his duty. However, the monster after his creator death, declares to Sir Walton about his plans to commit suicide, and that he shall no longer exist alone and miserable in this world: "I shall collect my funeral pile, and consume to ashes this miserable frame, that its remains may afford no light to any curious and unhallowed wretch, who would create such another as I have been. I shall die. I shall no longer feel the agonies which now consume me, or be the prey of feelings unsatisfied, yet unquenched" (186). This moment reflects the monster's suicidal thoughts during his depressive episode of the diseases. Although, there is no evidence that he gives up for these thoughts, but having suicidal thoughts is an enough indicator of reaching a severe stage of the disorder.

CONCLUSION

This paper has studied bipolar disorder as abnormal mood episodes of melancholy and mania caused by the traumatic life events in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The methodology in the study was restricted to psychoanalytic exploration of the monster character in order to reveal his struggle with bipolar disorder symptoms and impacts on society. These symptoms were constructed on the general behaviour, and thoughts of the creature in the novel. These symptoms were reflected in the study by mood oscillation, lack of identity, negative self-image, murders, and suicidal thoughts.

These concepts are scarcely studied by other studies on the monster character as other scholars are more interested in applying these concepts on the creator character. Consequently, the application of psychoanalysis to this novel has unpacked the psychic confusion of the monster and how he experiences bipolar disorder as a result from the toxic environment in a contextual and theoretical frame work. Another contribution of this study was that the creature develops criminal behaviour as a way to fulfil his traumatic thoughts.

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